

The enigmatic paintings of Miyoko Ito (1918–1983) are little known beyond Chicago, where the artist lived and worked for four decades. Her embrace of Surrealist and Pop-inflected iconography had a significant impact on younger practitioners, including the internationally recognized Chicago Imagists. Ito's interest in art, however, began in Berkeley, where she was born and raised, attended high school, and studied in the Department of Art Practice at UC Berkeley. Her senior year was interrupted by World War II, when Ito, a second-generation Japanese American, was sent to Tanforan—a San Bruno horse track turned internment camp—alongside her husband and thousands of others under Executive Order 9066, signed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1942. Once liberated, Ito briefly studied at Smith College before transferring to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Ito's geometrically inspired abstraction primarily involves the construction and exploration of interior and exterior space. Many works position a highly built-up form—sometimes with the suggestion of a figure—against a distant horizon of saturated yellow, red, blue, or green. While references to landscape painting are overt, Ito's work compellingly suggests a deeper engagement with psychological environments. In this way, her paintings are both personal and topographic—pictures of a mind endeavoring to understand itself in often hazy and remote surroundings. “Every time I have a problem, I go deeper and deeper into painting,” she said in a 1978 interview. “I have no place to take myself except painting.”

*MATRIX 267* presents a dozen paintings spanning several decades of the artist's practice. The exhibition marks the first solo presentation of Ito's work in Berkeley and the first in a public institution in nearly forty years. Her singular vision reminds us not only of our inseparability from the natural world, but that human interiors are just as vast and unknowable as any vista.

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